Memories of the Future
The Role of Memory
in Building a Gendered Identity
The Case of Women
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Abstract: This article focuses on the relationship between memory, female identity and the history of women: issues and areas of scholarship that have a comparatively recent history, but already present a rich spectrum of contrasting approaches and studies. In the case at hand, interpretations rooted in Foucault’s genealogical approach are contrasted with more recent postcolonial studies, against the backdrop of the political history of European and American feminism, a position that can scarcely be reduced to the more familiar terms of the debate between philosophers and neuroscientists. The writing that springs from female memory is not the function of an alleged specificity of the female brain, but the product of the ability of a specific cultural subject to construct a genealogy from the point of view of its unprecedented reality: a seemingly minor “supplement,” but one that has the power to subvert the main corpus of history and knowledge, as Virginia Woolf already showed in magisterial terms as early as 1929.

Let me explain the title. On a wall of the house in Via del Governo Vecchio – the place historically occupied by Roman feminists – some very interesting graffiti read: women’s desires are “memories of the future.” The original phrase was in German because it alluded to the famous (science-) fiction book, Erinnerungen an die Zukunft, by Erich von Daeniken, on the extra-terrestrial origins of our history and, therefore, of our very same future, considered just that: not of this earth.

Indeed, it is not just the desires, but also the memories of feminists that appear to be not of this earth. They are – as Luisa Passerini writes in her important essay on Becoming a Subject in the Time of the Death of Subject – “a fascinating genre and an important tool only if we succeed in creating a context where they can be fully used.” It takes a long time and a lot of work to transform memory into a historical source.¹

1. The Role of Memory in Building a Gendered Memory. The Case of Women.

And now let me explain the subtitle. As one of the founders of “memoria. Rivista di storia delle donne,” I remember that in the distant year of 1981, the editorial team was already stressing the complexity of the female experience and how difficult it was to come up with a single interpretation of the ambiguous terrain – which this experience is continually destined to move in – of the oscillations between political portrayals, social images, self-representation and desires. This complexity immediately laid bare the need to deal with the topic, whose formulation in these terms was quite precocious for the time, of the relationship between identity and history, or – rather – between identity, history and memory and why, in some cases, using the memory is a valid alternative to the rigidity produced by history.

“Choices of identity,” I am quoting from the editorial in the first issue, “self-images in society, self-representation in the institutional places of culture and self-management as a subject in private: all these are a permanent source of possible conflicts, splits and forced outcomes.”

This is true for all identities, but, for women, an additional difficulty emerges. It is true that – if they indeed pose the problem – historians almost always take for granted that research into the change in the historical roots of identity is self-sufficient. That is to say, as if, when speaking of Africans or Europeans, medieval or modern persons, we were to take it for granted that an identical substance continues to exist, beyond all change: i.e., in other words, the very essence of man. The same cannot be said for women. Or rather, it most certainly can be said and it often has been said, that is, investigations have been made in order to understand how changes in the legal, social, economic or medical condition of women have influenced their possibilities of emancipation or equality. Instead, much less often has it been wondered how these changes have altered the meaning (how it is articulated in society and subjectively understood) of the term “woman.” Some (a few) historians3 like Denise Riley have taken into consideration Michel Foucault’s advice to historicize the categories that the present takes to be self-evident realities. And although Foucault deemed the “history of the present time” to be at the service of a clear political aim (to denaturalize the categories on which the contemporary structures of power rest in order to destabilize this power), very often historicization has been assimilated to depoliticization.

Historians were very swift to welcome Hobsbawm’s warning that tradi-

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tion is always an “invention” that serves to legitimize the political action of the present,⁴ and it is indeed in this wake that a renewed look was definitely taken at the a-historical categories of the working class and the class struggle, typical of Marxist historiography. Much less incisive, if not totally absent, is historiographical innovation concerning the ways in which “the invention of tradition” works.⁵

Telling us much more about these ways are the considerations that Edward Said devotes to Giovanbattista Vico. Under his influence, he was taught that we can create our origins: they are not given facts, but acts of will.⁶

The *inventio* that Said talks of is an oxymoronic way of putting together the past and future, and holding together roots and wings. An exile’s identity is obtained by activating a form of imaginative memory or recollective imagination so that the future can be invented by rediscovering the past.

Nevertheless, it has been in some way possible to historicize workers. Something that cannot be said for the research into the “invention of tradition” and its *modus operandi* when we are speaking of “women.”

The only person who has made an attempt to rebuild this so-to-speak absent “tradition” has been Joan Scott. In one of her important works,⁷ she analyzed the many devices that quite different women have used, at different times, to build an identity: that of the feminist, a creature who, over the centuries, would unite as sisters Olympe de Gouges and Anna Maria Mozzoni, Katharine McKinnon and Carla Lonzi. Thus, in the manner of Foucault, Scott deconstructs the fictitious identity, which is usually presented as an uninterrupted historical substance, that the group of women could identify with.

It was precisely by taking up a similar motion to Scott’s invitation, that the journal *Memoria* came into being. I still remember the picture by Magritte that gave us the inspiration for the title: in the picture, blood spills from the chalky white head of a statue struck by a stone thrown from afar. The title of the picture is: “Memory.” And when we began to think of the journal which would then be named “memory” we had this picture in mind, together with the suicide of Virginia Woolf, and countless deaths of important women, from Olympe de Gouges to Carla Lonzi.

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2. Operations of Retrospective Identification are a Sort of Fantasized Echo…

In the case of the journal that I co-founded, we chose to favor memory – starting from the title – in order to indicate a suitable route towards thinning women’s veils of disloyalty to themselves often brought about by history. There were various types of difficulties involved in rebuilding a historical picture that could finally avoid leaving out women. First of all, we needed maps of subjectivity that concentrated on different narrations and a different role for genealogy. Or rather we needed new genealogies, which women could rebuild on the basis of the relations between the internal and external parts of their own world: that is, the relations between the originally devised and the historically given ways of being individuals and forming a group. It was not a matter of establishing another dominant memory, but of inviting to the table of historiographical interpretation a genealogy embodied, or rather, gendered by a sex which was completely different to one which had been at the centre of the dominant narrations.

The complications with building this different symbolic cartography arise from the fact that in all women and in every woman different types of temporality co-exist which mark out different forms of belonging. Every woman is like a mosaic of different temporalities and belongings. In the female existence, the simultaneity of what is not simultaneous, used by Ernst Bloch to dispute the linear conception of time and history prevalent in the Marxist vulgate which was common to communists and social democrats of the Weimar Republic, assumes a particularly acute dimension. Sexuality, sexual difference marks a diversity between temporality and belongings which co-exists in the female existence without veering in a single, linear direction. Indeed, the toll of a linear direction would be to lose the difference itself. But it is only when the awareness is achieved that this asynchronous synchrony is a resource and not a problem – with respect, for example, to history and modernity – that feminism is able to formulate a type of belonging whose substance in reality consists of criticizing the absoluteness of belonging. Every kind of traditional belonging is founded precisely on canceling the synchrony of the asynchronic. Having developed a belonging – which, so to speak, does not belong – is something that pertains to the great gains of feminism. Part of this belonging is the slant and free gaze that s/he who looks at things without losing sight of themselves has and indeed must have. At the basis is that “foreign” gaze that has allowed women to highlight the – how can we put it? – ethnic partialities of man as a falsely universal and, in truth, partial, extremely partial culture. But it is precisely the “non-belonging” nature of the belonging founded by feminism that has prevented this culture from forming the basis for an alternative political community to the male one.
Claiming women’s admission once and for all as a social group in history would have meant presupposing an identity understood in the essentialist sense, something that appealing to the memory was instead meant to call into question. As a matter of fact, appealing to the memory was meant to underline that it had been built from an operation of active recollection by a subject who “was building” her own tradition in the here and now. The fantasy filled the spaces left empty by history and helped to build the “commonality” (shared values) that could not be found elsewhere.

What the journal _Memoria (“memory”) _attempted to do was to bare the cards of the “invention of a tradition” in the same moment this took place, in accordance with the criteria in Foucault’s genealogical agenda. The emergence of memory was traced back to female identity as granting a sense of destiny. On this key point, we have to refer to the founding text of Italian feminism: the very short “philosophical novel” written in 1970 by Carla Lonzi against _The Phenomenology of Spirit:_

If Hegel had recognized the origin of woman’s oppression in the same way he recognized the origin of the servant’s oppression […] he would have encountered a great obstacle […] at the level woman-man, there is no solution to eliminating one of them, therefore the goal of seizing power is thwarted.

While worker power, stepping in from the power of capital, should wipe out the social relationship of exploitation, the end of patriarchal relationships does not depend on the establishment of a female power.

Power is not the goal in the conflict between the sexes: either in the more radical form of revolution, or in the democratic and reformist form of participation and redistribution.

“What escapes historical materialism […] is the archetype of ownership, the first object conceived of by man: the sexual object.”

We are speaking of retrospective identification, and of a fantasized echo in the construction of a particular identity: a gendered identity like the identity of being a woman. Therefore, this operation supposes that the part of the fantasy that refers to the unconscious dimensions is included in the field of investigation, in the psychoanalytical treatment of gendered identities. As we are taught by the psychoanalysts, it is precisely certain shared fantasies (what Laplanche and Pontalis call “fantasmes originaires”) that provide the terms that make up gendered identities.

It is interesting to note how all the reconstructions of fragments of the history of female identity underline the paradoxical surplus that seems to accom-

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pany all the phases in its development. The paradox concerns the degree of contamination in the more evident political gains that can be put down to the female imagination. On this point, the movement’s theorists have never ceased to ask themselves and wonder up to what point the movement was also a collective construction to console women for their inferiority in society.

This is exactly what Jacques Derrida is speaking about in a work written in the last part of his life, which sums up a series of questions which had concerned him for some time.9

The questions that Derrida asks himself are as follows: is it possible to speak of dreams without giving into the dominion of wakefulness? That is, is it possible that, when they take the shape of a story, dreams hold a sort of Unheimlichkeit to the logics of reason in their linguistic guise? And if it is possible, does the language of dreams not always sound like something foreign, as the French language was – for example – for Benjamin? Will it not almost be a forgotten language, lost in ourselves in the same way as the stumbling language of early childhood, but that we could perhaps start from to take a different slant on everything that we consider foreign, unheimlich and, perhaps, prejudicially hostile?

Freeing ourselves from the dream, “but without betraying it,” could then be a way to serve justice to the singularity of the Unheimlich without considering it an object to cancel out with a violent order. Therefore, it could be a way to recognize the uncanny identity of the Unheimlich, its paradoxical intimacy and non-belonging to ourselves.

Along a line that goes from Plato to Husserl, Derrida writes, philosophy has prohibited us from being able to speak of dreams without betraying them. For philosophy, the use of language belongs to watchful reason, in the same way as the dimension of the philosopher’s responsibility lies in wakefulness. Instead, poets, writers and artists have given a different response. As have essayists, adds Derrida, perhaps thinking of the nature of his own intellectual work, and psychoanalysts. For all of them, the impossible becomes possible: there is a language that does not betray dreams, that is, it can happen that, upon relaying it, we can remain at the level of the dream. It may not always be possible, but it is sometimes, because wakefulness does not totally close all the doors to incursions by dream life. Adorno, according to Derrida, continually hesitated between the philosopher’s “no” and the artist’s “yes,” while trying to deal with both answers and take up the twofold inheritance bestowed upon him from that oscillation. He did not renounce either philosophy or art, wakefulness or dreams, and it is precisely this twofold form of acceptance that

gave the sense of “his” Enlightenment: a double light and a double openness that, in the wake of Walter Benjamin, enabled a discourse on dreams itself, which was, in turn, dream-like.

Entertaining the existence of a language belonging to dreams means striking at the heart of the functionalist image of language, that is, the idea that language is essentially a machine for communicating, dominated by the ideals of transparency, perfect intelligibility and the universality of consent. In the dimension of dreams, it is misunderstanding more than understanding that forms the fundamental principle of language, precisely because the possibility of misunderstanding protects the other’s inability to yield, the inability to put the singularity of the event into words and the insuppressible right to dissent. But being concerned with the language of dreams also means defusing the dangers of linguistic particularism and nationalistic ideology which always lie in wait behind the defense of differences. Adorno, Derrida observes, knew very well that safeguarding one’s own language must not be mistaken for a metaphysical assertion of its privileges, and his love for German never gave in to the temptation to overestimate its philosophical spirit, or to consider it the “jargon of authenticity” that he thought Heidegger had transformed it into. Being concerned with the language of dreams, therefore, means bringing out everything in it that escapes the control devices of watchful thought, everything that is not logic, structure, metaphysics, but is instead sound, expression and memory. It means being aware that dreams inhabit our language like a foreigner permanently at work and exercising, once again, a new form of critical watchfulness towards the superstitions and linguistic racism which historical Enlightenment also fed on.

Starting from an opportunity apparently confined to irreality, like the language of dreams, Derrida thus takes his discourse to a political level in which the other’s rights – whether he be foreigner, different or dissident – occupy more and more room.

Going to enrich these considerations on the relationship between language and dreams is one of the crucial innovations introduced by feminism with regard to the most advanced points of male reflection. The language of women, of women writers and others too, alludes to the possibility of housing dreams like a body which, while foreign, is nevertheless not alien. Precisely because female language arises from the experience of women’s Unheimlichkeit from the established symbolic system, which is male. The route to female access to the symbolic feeds on this Unheimlichkeit.

On these points, reference to Maria Zambrano is obligatory. Of her work, first of all I would like to remember the correction she made to the famous proposition in Wittgenstein’s Tractatus: “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.” Against this pillar of the “linguistic turn,”
Zambrano poses another urgency: “The truth of what happens in the hidden heart of time, is the silence of life, and that cannot be spoken of. But whereof one cannot speak, one must write.”  For Zambrano, the solution consists of a manner of writing that, so to speak, keeps hold of the word, freeing it from the language that cannot say precisely what counts the most. It may be in this writing, which can keep hold of the word and prevent it from becoming detached from ourselves, from losing the intimacy with our “original feeling,” that the place of knowledge and life, without distinction but also without reciprocal annulment, may lie. But by “original feeling” Zambrano does not mean what we have learnt to confine within the unconscious, but those obscure and intricate areas where sense, a sense in search of its form, appears joined with feeling: “all those areas of life hiding in a corner either because they have always been subdued or because they are just beginning.”

As Cioran says, with Zambrano we are faced with a thought that “has not sold its soul to the Idea;” it has not given in to the Faustian pact that philosophers (with the exceptions of a certain Kierkegaard or Nietzsche) stipulate in the act of thinking. It is this Faustian pact that uproots the word from its sensitive being, from its “strange corporal existence.” Separated from the melody of the unsayable and reduced to the nucleus of the visible, so the word, in philosophy, becomes a pale body of light that converts all its former life into past ignorance and condemns to oblivion “the word’s forms or modes so that they would persevere in its past manner of being or appearing.” What is needed to enter the hidden vaults of the “past manner” of the word’s appearance is Antigone’s daring.

Diotima of Mantinea, whose voice echoes in the Symposium in Socrates’s words on love, too speaks from her “half-shadow,” from a presence hidden in philosophical thought itself, whose unheeded “Heart” she represents. That heart which, converted by the platonic love for ideas, was ensnared in the desire for immortality, while hers was a love for life which never corroded the source of its thirst.

But one thing definitely appears to have been acquired in the series of conquests, losses and reconquests: the link between one’s emotions and what to think and do in a given situation. Finding feasible words and gestures meant transforming a female experience and desire into a social scene which wanted

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11 Ibid.
Memories of the Future. Memory and Gendered Identity

to know nothing of it. Entering the void generated by female desire to find suitable self-expression and the social scene that wanted to know nothing of it was the mechanism that Joan Scott defined the “fantasy echo.”

Therefore, let us return to the dream of the female Jacobins as questioned by Scott in the work quoted earlier. Why did the Jacobins or nevertheless the women who actively took part in the French Revolution have (just as feminists still do today according to Scott) but “paradoxes to offer,” according to the famous statement by Olympe de Gouges, happily taken up by the American historian?

The thing is that then, as now, feminists are and – symbolically – create an irresolvable paradox. By having at the heart of its reflection and political action the critique of female exclusion, feminism would seem destined to desire the wiping out of the “sexual difference” in politics. But the women in whose name this task should be carried out are – discursively and symbolically – produced precisely by that “sexual difference.” Therefore: in that it acts for women, feminism produces that “sexual difference” that its political action should wipe out. The double-edged sword of “sexual difference” is the truest and deepest lifeblood of feminism.

3. Identity and History

As we have seen operations of retrospective identification are a sort of fantasized echo; it is precisely certain shared fantasies (what Laplanche and Pontalis call “fantasme originaire”) that provide the terms making up gendered identities.15

The echo of a fantasy is not a label which, once stuck on, can explain identity. It is rather the designation of a set of psychic operations that are at the basis of constructing certain categories of identity through the elision of historic differences and the creation of apparent continuities. It is not a tool that can be applied just like that for a conscious future-oriented construction. Instead, it is a powerful lever that is part of the set of tools belonging to the historian and scholar of social and political movements, and the tools belonging to all those who want to understand the historical situations lying behind identities’ apparent unchangeability.

Fantasy is a formal mechanism for structuring scenarios that give a historically specific depiction while also transcending the specific historical moment. Four aspects of fantasy need to be underlined in particular:

1. Fantasy is the setting of desire. In the fantasy the subject pursues neither the object nor its sign: the subject itself seems to be captured in the sequence of images. The subject does not form a depiction of the desired object, but is portrayed as a participant in the scene. The fantasized setting stages the satisfaction of the desire and the consequences of this satisfaction. Fantasy, Denise Riley upholds, is a type of “sustained metaphoricity.” To be in fantasy is to live “as if.” Every act of identification necessarily entails a scenario.

2. Fantasy has a twofold structure, which at the same time reproduces and disguises conflicts, antagonisms or contradictions. Often the desiring subject is put on the stage while playing out its transgressive desire and at the same time is punished for it.

3. Fantasy works like a strongly condensed narrative which structures the fundamental antagonism in a temporal succession: the contradictory elements are diachronically put back together, becoming cause and effect: for example, the advent of modernity produces the “loss” of traditional society. In reality, the qualities that are said to belong to traditional society only come into being with the emergence of modernity; indeed they are the other side completing it. The relationship is not diachronic but synchronic.

4. Fantasy has a mobile nature, both in structuring the collective and the individual identity; it draws coherence from confusion, reduces multiplicity to singularity, and reconciles illicit desire with the law.

Therefore, fantasy can be used to study the ways in which history – a fantasized narrative which imposes a sequential order to otherwise chaotic and contingent events – contributes to structuring a political identity.

4. Echo

There is a tension that needs to be investigated by historians wanting to analyze identity formation processes. I am speaking of the tension between the temporality of historical narrative (which bear notions of insurmountable time differences) and its condensation into recurring scenarios (which seem to negate this difference). This is where the echo comes into play.

An echo is not a simple repetition of the identical. Echoes are a sound that returns in an expanded form. Echoes are incomplete reproductions that usually only hand back the final fragments of a phrase, and therefore may also create a serious lack of understanding. In any case, they undermine the very root of the notion of lasting sameness often attributed to identity. Therefore,

16 Ibid.
echo is a process that reminds us of the temporal inexactness in the condensa-
tions of fantasy. Indeed these condensations work to disguise or minimize the
differences between repetitions. So the historians have to pay a lot of attention
to the echo effect, that is, to the differences between the original sound and its
resonance and to the role of time in the distortion. If the historically defined
subjectivity that is identity is thought of as an echo, repetition is no longer
the right term to describe it. Identity, as a continual, coherent and historical
phenomenon, is revealed to be fantasy, a fantasy that wipes out divisions and
discontinuity, and the absences and differences that separate subjects in time.
Echo destabilizes every effort to limit the possibilities of “sustained meta-
phoricity” while reminding us that identity (both as sameness and as self) is
constructed in a complex relationship with others. Identification, which pro-
duces identity, works like the echo of a fantasy, one generation after another,
restaging the process that forms individuals as social and political actors.\textsuperscript{17}

This is the function that, for example, – in the formation of feminist mem-
ory – the reference to Olympe de Gouges had.\textsuperscript{18}

What was and is striking about Olympe, we have said, is the power
of dream. In \textit{Séance royale. Les songes patriotiques}, dedicated to the Duke of
Orleans in 1789, Olympe imagines she is the Duke of Orleans proposing to
the King of France a renewed charter of parental relations (from divorce to
recognizing natural children) and the finally equal status of women, as an
author and citizen. The brochure is an illustration of the political potential of
dream, which held great power for everyone at the outset of the Revolution
when, for most of the French, there was a real and proper renegotiation of the
relations between fiction and reality. In addition to this, for Olympe, dreams
were also able to alter the boundaries drawn between the sexes. So, Olympe
wanted to produce a political identity for women which took possession \textit{tout
de suite} of the qualities (considered masculine) required upon asserting one’s
individuality and integrated them in a redefined female subject. At play was
emulation, the desire to acquire the moral qualities of an idealized figure for
oneself. However, here emulation did not mean acquiring particular male
traits, but putting into practice the perpetual processes of self-construction
until then reserved to men. When she laid claim to men’s rights for women,
Olympe attempted to give rise to women’s individuality, not by rejecting
sexual difference but by neutralizing its consequences. In her eyes, woman’s

\textsuperscript{17} On this point see the recent new edition of the classics by M. De Certeau, \textit{The Practice of
Everyday Life}, trans. T. Tomasik, Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 1998; and

\textsuperscript{18} On this complex subject, which calls into question the issue of “mirror neurons,” see the
identification through the imagination with man did not entail restructuring sexual identity itself, but extending its social and political potentials.

The Rights of Woman is divided into 17 articles exactly like the Declaration of the Rights of Man, but vigorously predicts the acknowledgement of women’s right of expression, the keystone – as the theorists of the “mother’s symbolic order” would later say – to female liberty. The Rights of Woman is both compensation for – by making women appear on a stage which to date had excluded them – and a radical questioning of the universalism of the word “man.” While simply referring to a plural humanity, Olympe points out that “man” – alone – does not represent it. If women are not given explicit mention, they are excluded; and to be included, her difference from man must be acknowledged for her not to have political rights. Including women means indicating that they are excluded from the presumed universality of the man of rights. This is quite an interesting issue in the Revolution. While Condorcet was in favor of a clear separation between political identity and biology, the Jacobines were advocates of what Michel Foucault was first to define a true biopolitics: for theorists like Count Volney, the political body was to be deemed a literal description. And the female body, extremely sexualized and subject to the despotic rhythms of mother biology, made women unsuited to political creation. Masculinity was associated with virtue and reason and politics; femininity with the home and reproductive functions. In this connection, very much worth reading is the report on the death of Olympe de Gouges published after her execution in the “La feuille du Salut Public:” “Olympe de Gouges, née avec une imagination exaltée, prit son délire pour une inspiration de la nature. Elle voulut être homme d’Etat […]. Il semble que la loi ait puni cette conspiratrice d’avoir oublié les vertus qui conviennent à son sexe.”19 Tolerated in the dreamy atmosphere of the start of the Revolution, in 1793 Olympe de Gouges was perceived as the embodiment of the risk of chaos being run, as a result of the denial of the law by the “imagination of dreams,” by rational social order and by the meaning of masculinity and femininity on which this order evidently depended. After the creative freedom of the 18th century, which had allowed the power of dreams and the imagination to renegotiate the relations between fiction and reality according to an imprecise but recognized code, the triumphant Revolution’s legal authority was deciding, in the name of Reason, to set limits that the imagination and dreams could no longer surpass.

In this sense Olympe became the embodiment of this limit: a liminal figure who set down her roots in the history of a dreamed freedom and for that very reason reached out to the dream of a future freedom.

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Recently I was rereading an essay by Angela Putino on illegality. I found some of the things that Angela writes on power and illegality, on what generates illegality inside power, really enlightening. At the beginning of her work, Angela rightly quotes Michel Foucault’s famous statement that what makes it possible for power to take hold of us is its invisible part. And she goes on to analyze the origin of all the modern and contemporary forms of the visible and invisible production of political power: in other words, the French Revolution. In particular, in this famous historical case Angela examines an element that neither political philosophy nor even feminist political philosophy had ever really thought out: the link between the exclusion of women and the spread of corruption among the incorruptible Thermidorians. Enough thought is never given to the connection between the guillotine that beheaded Olympe and the drowning in blood of the Revolution itself. And yet the connection is evident: the cancellation of Olympe’s demand for citizenship on the basis of her being a woman, that is, different and therefore a supporter of a different but quite live form of politics, does not produce the visible bases, but the invisible bases for illegality and corruption because it cancels the political citizenry’s living form of being and expression.

Today, we are once again dealing with the same Thermidorian currents and their suffocation of the live forces of politics. This is the invisible part of power, based on crucial exclusions which corrupt it and indeed make it illegal. This is precisely where the delicacy of the current situation lies and it is what makes it impossible to restrict ourselves to merely holding back the issue of gender representation. Indeed today gender difference is integrated into the parties’ political categories and customs and institutional politics. While it is no longer a question of the inability to understand female freedom, instead politics manipulates female freedom, weakening and reversing it. What I am referring to is the selection of personnel and the distribution of resources inside a circle based on affiliation and a structured set of political compatibilities and family ties.

Another reason why the fabric of memory needs to be continually rewoven: to thwart the guillotine of false conscience.

(Translated from Italian by Karen Whittle)

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